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BOOK REVIEWS.

SOCIAL JUSTICE, A Critical Essay. By Westel Woodbury Willoughby, Associate Professor of Political Science in the Johns Hopkins University. New York and London: Macmillan. 1900.

Dr. Willoughby's object in his recent work is to ascertain the general principles of right that should underlie our social institutions, and to apply these principles to the more important facts of economic and political life. Accordingly, he begins by analyzing the idea of justice in the abstract. Having found and enunciated a general formula of right, he outlines the extent to which the principle of equality is valid. After that he criticises the chief theories concerning the distribution of property and economic rewards, and then states and defends his own theory. All this is done in the first part: in the second part, he examines the right of the state to exist, to restrain liberty, to regulate economic activity, and to inflict punishment.

In his search for a formula of abstract justice, the author takes as a first principle the Kantian dictum that the individual reason is the legislative source of obligation and right. Each man's practical reason bids him realize his highest ethical self. To obey this categorical imperative he needs and possesses rights, that is, certain moral claims to freedom of action. In so far as his rights are essential to the development of his personality they may be called *natural*, but they are not natural in the sense that they actually exist when he is born. Since all rights originate in the ethical needs of the individual, they must be determined by individual conditions. To express it in another way, all rights are relative, not only to persons but to circumstances. There are, consequently, no absolute rights, that is, no rights that persist in all possible conditions. Hence the only general formula of right that can be enunciated is that each individual should have, so far as possible, the opportunity to realize his highest ethical self (pages 21, 24, 25).

This formula of justice is untenable because, in the first place, its ethical basis is unsound. The categorical imperative lacks the essentials of an authoritative command. The practical reason does, indeed, judge between right and wrong, and *declare* obligation, but it is not the creative source of obligation. It is not

"originally legislative," but only the messenger and interpreter of the commands of the Supreme Lawgiver. When a private soldier receives instructions from an orderly he recognizes them as binding, but he knows that their obligatory character lies not in the orderly who brought them, but in the superior officer who issued them. When my practical reason tells me that I ought to do something that happens to be disagreeable, I naturally ask, "whence arises the obligation implied in this ought?" If the practical reason can furnish no other authority for its command than its own "*sic volo, sic jubeo*," I shall appeal from this usurper, called the "autonomous reason," to my saner reason, which assures me that the wisest rule of conduct is to seek the good in whatever form it approves itself to me. If I am an end unto myself I see no good reason for recognizing those claims of my fellow-men called rights. They are, in fact, incapable of rational justification.

In the second place, even if we concede the validity of the categorical imperative, its two chief postulates can never constitute an adequate standard of justice. The first of them, "be a person and respect others as persons," is a noble sentiment, but it is not of the highest practical value. The section hands of a railway might interpret it as giving them a right to realize their personality by appropriating the company's goods. And this could be a correct interpretation, for the employers might still have greater opportunities of self-development than their ambitious employés. The latter would be using their employers as means, to be sure, but this would be no violation of personality: we are allowed to treat others as means, if at the same time we treat them as ends (page 332). On the other hand, since the claims of personality vary according to disposition and capacity, a man having immense power might deem his personality of such overmastering importance as to justify the exploitation of multitudes of his fellow-men. All that he would be bound to do would be to have some little regard to them as persons, as ends unto themselves. Nor does the second postulate of the categorical imperative, "act externally so that the free exercise of thy will may be compatible with the freedom of others according to a universal law," give more definite guidance. Men could accept this rule of equal freedom as an authorization for mutual crime. Husbands and wives could agree to violate their conjugal oaths; money lenders and captains of industry could crush the needy borrower and the moneyless worker

under the cover of free contracts. All of these actions would be ethically good, since each man would act consistently with the equal freedom of others. Again, this universal law which is to be the maxim of individual conduct is not a universal law in any true sense. Guided by it, the majority of men would in all probability claim rights that would be mutually irreconcilable. Yet the amount of freedom claimed by each, provided only that he deemed his standard universally capable of enforcement, would be the true measure of his rights. If to escape this difficulty, recourse be had to the principle of reciprocal rights and the social weal, and if it be urged that the individual estimate must be modified by the social need, then the standard is no longer subjective. The judgment of the individual reason is set aside, and rights are determined by the requirements of the objective order.

In the third place, Dr. Willoughby's principle of justice leads in his own hands to conclusions that are repugnant to the moral sense, and fatal to the sacredness of personality. In case of conflict, he says, the right of the individual must yield to the general good. Thus, an individual has no strict right to subsistence if the welfare of humanity will not be advanced by his continued existence (pages 207, 208). For the sake of the social good an individual though innocent might be put to death (page 333). And this would not be a violation of his right to be treated as a person: as an individual, indeed, he would be used as a means, but as a *socius* he would be treated as an end; for his social good demands that someone should suffer, and when someone does suffer his "rational and universal self" is served (pages 332, 375, 246). Social life would be impossible without the constant subordination of the claims of individuals to the like claims of a greater number of individuals (page 333). These deductions seem to me to be the *reductio ad absurdum* of the author's principle of justice. That an innocent man may be deprived of life for the social good, is a proposition little short of inhuman, and its inhumanity is not much softened by the assurance that socially the victim is treated as an end though the means to that end be the annulment of his individual personality.* Finally his approval of Rashdall's declaration that the rights of one must yield to the rights of many, subordinates personality to mere numbers, and places the final determinant of rights in a false social utility.

*I have tried to interpret fairly Dr. Willoughby's reasoning on this point, and should be very sorry to do him any injustice.

The Schoolmen would agree with Dr. Willoughby in deriving rights immediately from personal obligations and in making them an ethical means to an ethical end, but they would not accept his view of the nature of the end and the source of the obligations. Personal perfection for its own sake can never become an obligatory end of conduct. In the absence of Divine guidance, the primary and ever-insistent law of human nature is to seek the good and the only good that is rationally desirable for any man is that which seems so to him. It is not necessarily that which we call ethical, for ethical good supposes obligation, and obligations, as we have already seen, can never be produced by the practical reason. Man's ultimate end, therefore, and the source of the obligation to seek it, lie outside of himself, in the purposes of his Creator. According to these purposes, man will reach the full perfection of his personality only in the sphere of existence that comes after death. Toward this final end he is morally bound to move. In order that he may be able to obey this obligation, may have the means to reach his final end, he is endowed with those moral powers that we call Rights. Consequently, the ultimate end of human conduct, the efficient cause of human obligation, and the final determinant of human rights, is God.

Rights, however, have a specific field, and a specific proximate purpose. This specific field coincides with the field of man's social relations. If he were not a social being, destined to live in society, he would have no rights. The very concept of rights supposes a relation between the subject and some other man; hence to predicate rights of man unrelated would be to empty this word of meaning. Rights are social, not in the sense that society creates all of them, as Dr. Willoughby holds, but in the sense that the reason of their being is the social nature of every individual, and in the sense that they come into actual exercise only in society. Their specific proximate purpose is the social order. Accordingly, the general principle of justice may be thus expressed: "Maintain the right order of social life."

The proximate purpose of rights is the social order, but the purpose of the social order itself is the welfare of the individual. Hence the ultimate reason of rights, is, as we have said above, to enable *the individual* to attain his final end. More specifically, it is to afford him the means to obey that law of his Creator which he finds written in his reason, the Natural Law. Not all the rights that any individual enjoys at any time will be absolutely necessary

for this purpose, but as many of them as are absolutely necessary at all times will be the natural heritage of all individuals. These indispensable rights are logically prior to, and independent of social ordinances. They arise primarily out of the individual's relations to his Creator. Such are for instance, the right to life, subsistence, freedom of contract, freedom of conscience. They are *absolute*, inasmuch as their *existence* is not conditioned by any human power, individual or social. While absolute as to their existence, they are conditioned in their extent. They are limited in each individual by the rights of his fellow-men. Again, though they cannot be annulled by others, some of them are alienable by the subject himself; for instance, a man who has committed, or is actually threatening murder has already forfeited his right to life. He himself has terminated its existence. But these absolute rights may not *per se* be subordinated to the good of any number of men. The apparent welfare of all humanity would not justify the killing of one innocent man. I say, "the apparent welfare," because its true and permanent welfare would never be promoted by such a means. The Allwise Creator who wishes every man to attain the creative purpose of his being, has not defeated His own will by allowing contingencies in which some men can be successful only through the utter failure of others. In the order of reality there is no such thing as a conflict of rights. Apparent conflicts are frequent, but they are all subjective, resulting from human inability to fix the mutual limits of various claims. Hence we say that while natural rights are limited in extent, they are absolute in existence, being like the individual's personality, sacred and inviolable.

In this chapter on the scope of equality in distributive justice, the author reaches conclusions to which there can be no valid objections. All men are equal in the spiritual order, *i. e.*, as rational creatures, but they are not, and cannot be made equal physically, mentally, legally, politically, or economically. Passing on to consider theories of ownership, he says that first occupation does not give a valid title to property, since it may have been accomplished by chance, fraud, or force. We reply that first occupation *under proper limitations* is one of the just titles of ownership. In so far as every inhabitant of the earth has a natural right to live upon its produce, all property is common; but for the adequate realization of this common right, the social institution of private ownership is necessary. Every man, then, has a natural right to *some* private

property, and may fix the concrete limits of this right as he pleases, so long as he does not interfere with the rights of others, or the good of the social order. Hence whenever a first comer can appropriate goods, of whatever kind, without injuring the social order, which, as we have said, is the proximate determinant of all rights, occupation alone will give him a valid title. As to existing legal titles, Dr. Willoughby is right in saying that they are not necessarily valid in ethics. As a matter of fact, we find that the civil law often sanctions unjust possession, and often neglects to sanction claims that are just. Yet it is going too far to say that the law takes little account of the ethical character of the claims on which it does confer titles, and makes no attempt to secure to each individual the amount of property that he should have according to the principles of abstract justice. In the matter of property as in other fields, the civil law usually tries to conform to the principles of the moral law, at least, in so far as these make for the common weal. Its titles are ethically valid when it sanctions definite rights already existing; when it decides justly between the conflicting claims of individuals, that is, when it determines indeterminate rights; and finally, when, consistently with the social order, it *creates* rights, by assigning to an individual goods to which he has no previous claim.

Having rejected both the occupation theory and the legal theory, the author takes up the theory that determines all property rights on the basis of labor performed. He reviews at some length the doctrines of Locke, the Physiocrats, and the later English writers, and then examines the question of the morality of interest. In his brief historical survey of the doctrines concerning interest on money, he tells why usury was condemned by the Schoolmen. It was because of the Aristotelian view that money was by nature barren. While this explanation of the Scholastic teaching has the merit of age, it is nevertheless unfair. A defence of the Mediæval teaching and legislation on usury is not called for here, but since I am striving to set forth the view of the Schoolmen on the leading points treated by Dr. Willoughby, one or two observations will not be out of place. As to teaching, the Schoolmen did, indeed, say that money was infertile, but they did not make the same statement regarding capital. Neither was the infertility of money the principal, much less the only argument that they used against the taking of interest. As to the expediency of the anti-usury legislation that they defended, I take the liberty to quote a few words from

a specialist in this field, the economic historian, W. J. Ashley. Speaking of the economic conditions that obtained up to the middle of the fifteenth century, he says: "So far as wealth was intended to some as capital, it found ways open to its employment—ways which were adequate for the time, and against which the Canonists had not a word to say" ("English Economic History," II., page 438). Noting the fact that the Church's chief concern in this legislation was to protect the great masses of the people, he continues: "When the Canonist doctrine is accused of muddle-headed stupidity, all that is meant is that it had not already arrived at that sharp, clear-cut principle distinguishing between the legitimate and the illegitimate use of money power, for which modern economists and jurists are still seeking" (Ibid., page 439). There is consequently a wide difference between the Scholastic objection to the payment of interest to the money lender in Mediæval society, and the Socialistic objection to the return of a part of the product to the capitalist in the industrial society of to-day. In his reply to the Socialists, Dr. Willoughby is on surer ground. Adopting the Austrian theory of interest on capital, he concludes that Boehm-Bawerk and his co-laborers have demolished the labor theory of value. All the wealth resulting from economic processes does not belong to labor, and even if it did it should not be apportioned in exact accordance with the amount produced by each laborer. The physical and psychological differences existing among men should be taken into account in distributing rewards; for it is a principle of justice that unequals should not be treated equally. Finally, to distribute goods on the basis of the labor theory of value and property would require an organization of the state, the Socialistic organization, that is impossible of realization. Being impossible, it cannot be ethical.

Explaining next the labor theory as applied to property in land, the author cites the opinions of George, Mill, Wallace and Spencer, and shows that there is no good reason for regarding property in land as essentially better or worse than any other form of private property. George's proposal that in the event of the establishment of the single-tax system, the existing land owners should receive no compensation, is unjust. It would deprive many of property for which, as a rule, they have exchanged honestly acquired values. But if society could find a way to appropriate the "unearned increment" without affecting present market values, no

ethical justification would be necessary, for society would be merely taking its own.

Coming next to the effort theory, which would distribute rewards in proportion to the effort expended in producing them, he points out the insuperable difficulties that stand in the way of any fair and accurate measurement of this factor. Accordingly this theory must go the way of those already considered; it will not do for a universal principle of distributive justice. Now I maintain that effort, in so far as it can be measured by a balancing of time, sacrifice and results ought to be taken into account in apportioning the value of the product among the various factors of production. But Dr. Willoughby has an objection to the effort theory that is fundamental. Rewards, he tells us, ought not to be apportioned on this basis because "every individual is under a moral obligation to employ his talents to the fullest extent for the benefit of humanity" (page 197); he cannot therefore claim a reward for performing a duty. Both of these propositions lack validity. A man's first duty is to himself, or rather to his God. As between himself and humanity, he is bound to employ his talents as well as he can, primarily for his own sake, and secondly for the sake of his fellow-men, whose human nature is the same as his own. And there are cases in which a man may claim a reward for performing a duty; for instance, if the duty has been assumed in virtue of an onerous contract. I deny also the right of society to compel an innocent man to work, except in extreme cases when the social order would suffer notably in the absence of such compulsion.

Finally, he outlines that theory which holds that goods should be distributed according to intensity of needs. Those who can use goods best should receive most. To this doctrine, he says, no ethical objection can be made. But an ethical objection can be made, for the simple reason that the principle which this theory supposes, namely, that each individual must render mankind the greatest benefit within his power, has already been proved unsound. At the same time the principle of needs, like the principle of effort, will have some place in any just scheme of distribution. Continuing, he refers to the right-to-subsistence theory, and traces it in legislation as far back as the English poor law of 1601, and in Socialistic thought to Fichte. Neither of these sources is original. The right to subsistence was enunciated in scientific form by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, and hundreds of years previously it had been taught in all its essentials by the Fathers of

the Church both East and West. As to the validity of this theory, Dr. Willoughby holds that every individual will have a right to subsistence so long as he contributes what he can to the welfare of humanity, and so long as humanity is benefited by his continued existence. Against this exaltation of humanity and effacement of the individual, I place the dictum of Aquinas that, in case of urgent need a man may, if no other means be at hand, save himself from starvation by seizing some of the goods of his neighbor (2a, 2ae, q66, a7). This principle, I think, is more in accordance with common humanity and right reason than Dr. Willoughby's assurance that in actual practice the right to subsistence will *almost* always be valid. If the right to subsistence, which is at bottom the right to life, be not absolute, if it be subordinated to the welfare of humanity, then the end and measure of rights is no longer the personality of the individual, but a personality "conceived as universal," a standard which to the mind not dominated by Hegelianism becomes in the concrete the welfare of the majority.

This, then, is the only specific rule of distribution that Dr. Willoughby can furnish: goods should be distributed according to intensity of needs, and intensity is determined by ability to use rationally. He holds that this principle gives a deeper moral sanction to private ownership than any empiric facts; for all property now becomes a trust to be utilized by the owner for the benefit of himself and of humanity. If some complain that the principle is vague, all that can be said is that more efficient guidance is beyond the power of any ethical system (pages 212, 213). Now this moral sanction attaching to property is not, as Dr. Willoughby seems to think, a new concept in ethical thought. Aquinas declared in substance that property was a trust when he said that, in the possession of riches the order of reason must be observed, which is to say, that a man must possess justly what he owns, and use it in a proper manner for himself and others ("Contra Gentiles," book 3, § 123). And in the Scholastic principle of the supreme right of all men to subsistence, we have at least one rule that affords more explicit guidance than Dr. Willoughby's principle of needs. It is not the only specific rule to be found in the Scholastic system, but of itself it goes a long way toward meeting the urgent demands of the hour. If it were recognized and enforced by society the problem of distribution would be infinitely nearer solution.

Thus far of the author's application of the principles of justice to economic problems: we shall now examine very briefly his

chief conclusions on the rights and functions of the State. There is no abstract right of the state to exist, he says; each political organism must be judged by itself; if its influence as a whole tends to promote moral ends it is justified. It seems to me that this is not the best possible statement of the question. Although instances may be conceived in which the existing government might be worse than no government, such a condition would be abnormal and temporary. As a general proposition, we can say that some degree of political organization is essential to the welfare of mankind everywhere, and consequently that the state is an ethical necessity and has a right to be. It has also the right to issue such ordinances as are necessary to attain the purpose of its existence. Concerning the character of this latter right Dr. Willoughby's refutation of the Utilitarian theory of the state's coercing power is conclusive. But when he states positively the conditions in which the state may exercise its coactive power he minimizes somewhat the rights of individuals and of the lower political nations. Public authority, he says, may force an individual to change his course of conduct if it is convinced that the change will be for his good. This rule applies even to the matter of religious belief. And a higher nation may compel a less civilized one to adopt such policies as will benefit the lower nation itself, or humanity at large. Now while these rules are valid in a general sense, they affirm too much; some further distinctions must be made. First, as to individuals, we must distinguish between internal and external acts. If the act be internal, that is, an exercise of opinion or faith, and if this belief be sincere, the social authority will never have a right to interfere. So long as the individual injures only himself, a direct exercise of force against his honest liberty of conscience can never be justified, no matter how disinterested the motives of the coercing power. In the case of external actions, where the individual does not harm others, compulsion may be used only to prevent self-injury of the gravest kind. The problem here is to harmonize the individual's right to liberty of action with the state's right, nay, its duty, to rescue him from his own folly, to prevent him from destroying his very capacity for rights. For, since social authority exists for the good of the individual, its province surely includes the work of deterring men from such grossly irrational conduct as is tantamount to self-destruction. We find this principle recognized to some extent in the state's treatment of lunatics and those attempting suicide.

Practically, then, the harmony that we are seeking may be best obtained by the rule that, the social authority has the right forcibly to intervene whenever an individual is pursuing a course of conduct that proves him to differ only in degree from suicides and fools.

Secondly, with regard to the lower political nations, the same principle will hold as has just been enunciated for individuals. That is to say, when an inferior state is acting in such a way that it fails utterly to attain the end for which it exists, when it is destroying those interests that are essential to social well-being, when it is scarcely better than no social authority at all, then a higher nation will have the right to use coercion for the good of the people coerced. I say, "for the good of the people coerced," because it is obvious that any nation may interfere with another for its own good, for the protection of its own rights. The practical difficulty in the case of the higher nations will be to know just when their rights have been actually violated by the less civilized peoples. When Prof. Burgess says in substance that a civilized state has a right to impose a better social order upon an inferior people if the latter is impeding that degree of progress to which the higher nation or humanity at large has a right, he is correct theoretically. (Quoted in "Social Justice," page 267). In practice, as the world's experience has abundantly proved, the higher nations can not always be trusted to decide when intervention should take place and how to exercise it. And it certainly remains to be proved that the determination of the time and manner of exercising this "world-duty" to-day ought to be left solely and unreservedly to the Teutonic nations (page 268).

In his chapter on the Ethics of the Competitive Process, the author has an extended and thorough refutation of Herbert Spencer's contention that human progress depends upon the free play of the biologic law of the survival of the fittest, and that government functions should accordingly be reduced to a minimum. He shows that the biologic process, which would efface the individual for the sake of the species, is not only immoral, but hostile to true progress. Rightly understood the ethical and the cosmic processes are in harmony. It is admitted, indeed, that present social conditions are not all that they should be, that the individual is in too many cases used as a mere stepping-stone for social advancement; but it is not admitted that this conflict is essential to progress. He denies therefore Benjamin Kidd's contention that the interests

of the social organism and the interests of a majority of the individuals composing it at any one time, are irreconcilable. The absolutely competitive régime is the ideal one, but it must be maintained on a high ethical plane. Practically, state activities should be multiplied wherever they would be certainly followed by beneficial results.

Taking up the subject of the state's punitive power, Dr. Willoughby rejects the retributive theory on the ground that the exact degree of moral guilt, and consequently the adequate measure of punishment, can in no case be accurately determined. Besides, the state has not the right to interpret and avenge the Moral Law. The criminal law, being concerned merely with the general weal, is not called upon to punish guilt, as such. The rational theory of punitive justice, then, is the utilitarian, which aims solely at some future good, whether of the individual or of society. True, this principle justifies the infliction of punishment without reference to the degree of guilt; yet, "the criminal is not treated merely as a means when his good is given equal consideration with the good of others in determining the general welfare" (page 362). This reasoning, as I have already shown, is unsound because it sanctions the violation of individual personality. The plain truth is that the utilitarian theory of punishment will allow men in authority to visit the heaviest chastisements upon the lightest crimes if they think that the social good will be thereby advanced. On the other hand, the argument that the retributive theory must be discarded because criminal courts cannot determine to a nicety the degree of guilt, is far from being conclusive. The degree of guilt attaching to the average criminal can be approximated with as near an approach to ethical requirements as is possible in any other sphere of legal administration. As a matter of fact, men everywhere attempt such estimates, and agree substantially as to the varying degrees of malice to be attributed to different crimes. If the moral judgment may not be trusted here, neither is it reliable in any of its other decisions concerning right and wrong. Moreover, the concept of wrong-doing includes necessarily the concept of a sanction, of punishment. If this moral conviction is ignored in the administration of punitive justice, if guilt is not punished as such, and according to its degrees, then the moral sense of humanity is outraged, and the social weal correspondingly injured, because of this direct official contempt shown to the Moral Law. For we must remember that the Moral Law is the

one permanent guide of social well-being and human progress. Hence the state does not assume unwarranted powers when as the Vindicator of the Moral Law it metes out such retributive justice as it can. It is the chief guardian of the social order, so constituted by the Divine Author of the social order, and must in all reason be endowed with such powers as are essential to the proper discharge of its functions.

Summing up this appreciation of "Social Justice," I find that the author has done his best work in the second part, where he treats of the province of the state. His formulation of the abstract principles of justice, and his application of them to economic problems, are faulty because built upon an unsound ethical basis. From the practical point of view his work is likewise unsatisfactory. The introductory chapter assures us that his practical aim is to contribute to the solution of that problem which arises out of the wide-spread popular demand for a more just distribution of rewards. Yet his *summum principium* of distributive justice affords but an uncertain light to those, be they scholars or toilers, who are seeking an answer to this demand. It is too general, too vague, too meagre, to furnish much positive guidance. Dr. Willoughby believes that he has made the most comprehensive application yet attempted of transcendental principles to the concrete problems of life; and yet his work falls far short, both in extent and thoroughness, of that done in the same field by the Schoolmen and some of their modern interpreters. (See especially the monumental work of Theodore Meyer, recently completed, entitled, "Institutiones Juris Naturalis," St. Louis, B. Herder). In this connection, I cannot refrain from noting some serious defects in the historical portions of "Social Justice." Although he professes to have examined the chief theories of social and political philosophy that have been formulated in the past, he has but one meagre mention of the systems of the Schoolmen. He seems to hold that the doctrine of the moral responsibility of rulers first became general in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and that the idea of the strictly ethical character of conduct was generally extended into the industrial order only within the present century (page 2). If by the doctrine of the moral responsibility of rulers he means the doctrine that sovereigns were bound to administer their offices in accordance with the principles of justice, he is guilty of an historical error when he makes its origin so recent. It was common in the teaching of the Schoolmen, and

in all the political thought of the Middle Ages. The Schoolmen likewise insisted on the ethical character of all economic activity, and defined the duties of each social class with a minuteness that the world has not seen since. In the words of Prof. Ashley, "No such sustained and far-reaching attempt is now being made, either from the side of theology or of ethics, to impress upon the public mind principles immediately applicable to practical life" (*English Economic History*, II., page 388). When, therefore, Dr. Willoughby pleads for such an application to-day, he is not taking the newest view-point in the evolution of ethical thought, but merely returning to the position of the Schoolmen.

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THE EARLY HISTORY OF ENGLISH POOR RELIEF. By E. M. Leonard (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1900.)

For the future student of the early history of poor relief the volume before us will be an indispensable book of reference. Apart from the action of the legislature, we have hitherto had but scanty information from contemporary sources as to the execution of the early acts, or as to other attempts to grapple with those problems of pauperism which became increasingly pressing during the sixteenth century. Before the state definitely recognized its responsibility, and enforced compulsory assessment, many attempts were made both by the central and the local authority, by corporate as well as by individual effort, to meet the difficulties of the times. For this period as for that which immediately followed when the experiments tried in scattered centres were incorporated into the national system Miss Leonard has collected an enormous mass of material. With this before us we understand more clearly than before how every fresh step in Elizabethan legislation had some experiment as its justification. All sorts of methods were adopted in different places. Some failed, some would seem to have been successful in certain places at certain times, some have survived to our own day. As the writer points out, three main features have contributed to the building up of the English system of relief, viz., municipal regulation, national legislation, and the orders issued by the Privy Council to secure efficient administration. With the legislation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries we are all familiar: the main interest of this volume consists in the light it